

BioBlitz

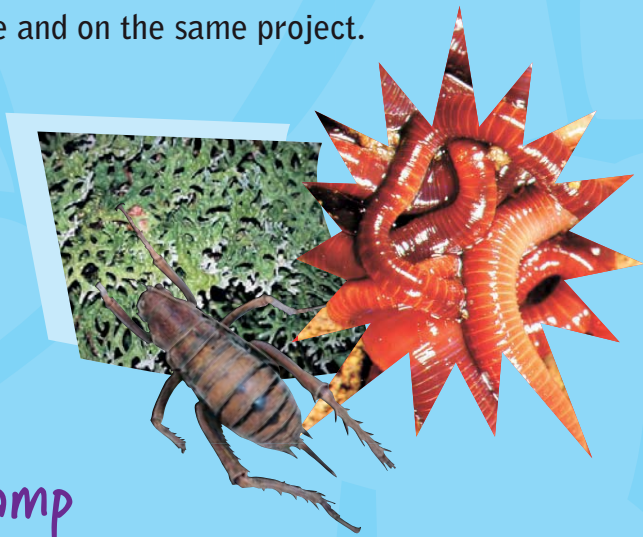
... finding nature in the city

What is BioBlitz?

BioBlitz is a scientific race against time. It is educational. And it is heaps of fun!

The goal is to count as many species as possible in a 24-hour survey of two Auckland parks—Dingle Dell (a forest remnant owned by Auckland City Council) and a native bush gully at Meadowbank School. The emphasis is on recording the total number of species, not naming every creature that has been found.

This is the first time a BioBlitz has happened in New Zealand, although it is a regular annual event in parts of the USA. BioBlitz is a unique opportunity for scientists, students and the public to experience the vast array of species (biodiversity) living in a healthy urban park. It is rare for so many different types of biologists to be able to work together in the same place, at the same time and on the same project.



Base camp

Species that cannot be identified on the spot are brought back here to “base camp” for other experts to examine using microscopes and other specialist equipment.

All information is being recorded on our computer databases. The total number of introduced and native species is being tallied at hourly intervals, and announcements are being made at regular intervals. Check the tally board if you wish to see the current number of species found.



Valuable data

BioBlitz will generate a list of species found in the two park areas. This will benefit successful park management by identifying pest species that should be monitored or controlled, and native species that need looking after. The survey may reveal unique aspects of the parks that were not known previously. As we gain valuable information about urban environments, we can begin to understand the extent to which urban parks are sustaining the richness of Auckland’s biodiversity.

Why is biodiversity important?

We usually hear “biodiversity” associated with the vast number of species in tropical rainforests. Yet the diversity of life in our own backyards is phenomenal—there are hundreds of organisms. You have many more neighbours than you realise! Most of these neighbours are essential. The clean water, fertile soil, and air to breathe that we take for granted are all the result of the vast network of species performing the special tasks that are their role in life. Some people call biodiversity the “web of life” because it supports us every minute of the day.

The searchers

Teams of specialist biologists (botanists, mycologists, entomologists, etc) search around the clock for every possible species they can find. Nocturnal animals, such as some insects and vertebrate pests, are much easier to find during darkness. Most species can be identified in the field.



The final tally

BioBlitz will finish at 3pm Saturday, exactly 24 hrs after it started. The countdown to the final tally will start at midday with the final number being announced at 3pm.

